



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT Vermont/New Hampshire

JULY 2005

### Committed to the future of rural communities

**STATE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE:** As we begin the final quarter of fiscal year 2005, Rural Development is leaving its imprint across our unique region. From wastewater system upgrades ensuring cleaner streams to capital investments to support good paying job opportunities and housing development, Rural Development is working hard to improve the quality of life in NH and VT. Our strategies to reach out to new communities and a greater diversity of customers is proving successful, however, we know we have further to reach for our programs to make the ultimate impact. There are still many more people and communities that need our services. In this newsletter, you will read about efforts we have undertaken to increase access to Rural Development's programs.

On July 21, 2005, Tom Dorr was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as Under Secretary for USDA Rural Development. I believe that under his leadership, our ability to bring new opportunities to our rural residents will expand even further. As USDA Secretary Mike Johanns said about Mr. Dorr, "He is a tireless advocate for rural America." I look forward to working with him and sharing his commitment to a vibrant rural America.

### NON-PROFITS – FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Rural Development's Self Help Housing Program is an innovative way to provide affordable housing for low income families and has been highly successful in states from California to Maine. Under the supervision of a non-profit sponsor organization, 4 to 10 families work together to build their homes. Non-profit organizations receive grants from USDA Rural Development to recruit eligible families, provide technical assistance and administer the program. Families contribute 65% of the labor requirements of the project.



Hoping to escalate the use of the Self Help Housing Program, USDA Rural Development and the Vermont Housing Conservation Board (VHCB) co-sponsored a Self Help Housing Workshop on June 15<sup>th</sup> at the Hotel Coolidge in White River Junction, VT. The goal of the workshop was to educate non-profit housing organizations in both VT and NH on how to develop a Self Help Housing Program in their community to create high quality affordable housing for low income families.

If you would like more information on bringing a Self Help Housing Program to your community, please contact Michael Bard, Housing Specialist at 802-828-6013, [michael.bard@vt.usda.gov](mailto:michael.bard@vt.usda.gov) or write him at USDA Rural Development, City Center, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 89 Main Street, Montpelier, VT 05602.

## JUNE 2005 NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH

National Homeownership Month was celebrated in June by Rural Development employees and many of our housing partners across New Hampshire and Vermont. There were tree plantings, radio talk shows, workshops, a housing fair, an appearance on Housing and Urban Development's monthly cable television show and two Across the Fence programs featuring Rural Development's single family home mortgage and repair loan programs.

A very heartwarming event was held at the home of a 94-year old Groveton, NH man, Maurice Goulet. Employees of Tri-County Community Action Program (CAP) and Rural Development spent June 15<sup>th</sup> tearing down a dilapidated front porch on Mr. Goulet's home and replacing it with a new one. They mowed the lawn and removed unwanted materials from the basement and garage. All in all – it was a very productive day. Tri-County CAP went back later to complete the project, replace windows and finish foundation work. There was no need to work on the roof, as Mr. Goulet replaced it by himself last year!!!!



**Before**



**The Work Begins**



**Mr. Goulet and his daughter Debbie watch as the porch roof comes down.**



**After**

*This picture, taken by Angie Francesco, Rural Development Technician in the Conway, NH office, was chosen as "Best Picture" for this quarter.*



## UNDER SECRETARY GILBERT GONZALEZ VISITS NEW HAMPSHIRE AND VERMONT

On a recent trip to New Hampshire, USDA Rural Development Under Secretary Gilbert Gonzalez met on the morning of May 17, 2005 with leaders in New Hampshire to discuss economic challenges and the role that Rural Development programs can play in meeting those needs. Meeting with Under Secretary Gonzalez were Stuart Arnett, Director of Economic Development; New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development; Stephen H. Taylor, Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Marketing and Foods; Steven Christy, President of Mascoma Savings Bank, and Mike King, Executive Director of North Country Council. Jolinda H. LaClair, State Director of USDA Rural Development, and Rhonda L. Shippee, Director of Business and Cooperative Programs for USDA Rural Development, were also at the meeting.



**Dwight Sargent, Owner and President of Pompanoosuc Mills with USDA Rural Development Under Secretary Gilbert Gonzalez and State Director Jolinda LaClair.**

Also in attendance were members of the Vermont Wood Manufacturers' Association (VWMA), Mary Jeanne Packer, Executive Director, and Board Members Bob Gasperetti and Dexter Landers. Under Secretary Gonzalez and State Director LaClair presented the VWMA with a \$19,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) ceremonial check. VWMA will use the grant money for the statewide implementation of the Vermont Forest Heritage Trail Guide Marketing project. The project will continue to identify and train businesses to accept visitors and to purchase and install signage for participating businesses. Sixteen small rural businesses will be identified initially, involving 227 existing jobs and creating another 16. This is the third RBEG awarded to the Association which has trained wood product manufacturers to better market their products to tourists. A driving tour guide book is being published which will map up to 70 small rural businesses.

After meeting with the NH leaders, Under Secretary Gonzalez and Rural Development staff visited Pompanoosuc Mills in East Thetford, VT. There he met with leaders in the Forest Products Industry to discuss the impact of the industry on Vermont's economy. The visit started with a tour of the showroom by Dwight Sargent, Owner and President of Pompanoosuc Mills and ended with a round-table discussion. Attending this meeting were Jonathan Wood, Commissioner of VT Forest, Parks and Recreation; Bruce Hyde, Commissioner of the VT Department of Tourism and Marketing; Rob Roy, Bank North; Kiersten Bourgeois, VT Department of Economic Development; Ted Brady, Senator Leahy's office; and Brian Keefe, Senator Jeffords' office.



**Mary Jeanne Packer, Executive Director of Vermont Woods Manufacturers' Association is presented with a \$19,000 USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant ceremonial check from USDA Rural Development State Director Jolinda LaClair and Under Secretary Gilbert Gonzalez. Watching the presentation is Dwight Sargent, President and Owner of Pompanoosuc Mills.**

## CROSSING THE VERMONT AND NEW HAMPSHIRE BORDER

### NORTHERN COMMUNITY INVESTMENT CORPORATION RECEIVES \$1.7 MILLION FROM USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR BUSINESS LENDING PROGRAMS

Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC) received \$1.7 million from USDA Rural Development. Rhonda Shippee, Director of Business and Cooperative Programs for USDA Rural Development, presented Forest Buckland, NCIC President, and Suzanne Roberts, NCIC Vice President, with a ceremonial check at their Anniversary Celebration on June 1, 2005.

Two loans, each for \$750,000, were made from USDA Rural Development's Intermediary Relending Program and will be used to provide low-interest loans for business and community development. One of the loans will service the Northeast Kingdom Counties of Caledonia, Essex and Orleans, VT. The second will be used in Carroll, Coos, and Grafton Counties in NH. NCIC also received a \$200,000 Rural Business Grant to establish a revolving loan fund to provide capital for emerging, as well as established, artisan-type enterprises in the Northeast Kingdom. NCIC has identified 43 small and emerging rural art-based businesses in the Northeast Kingdom that can benefit from these loans, with the potential of saving or creating a minimum of 50 full and part-time jobs.

NCIC received its first loan from USDA Rural Development in 1980. From 1980 to 2004, NCIC has received a total of \$5,100,000 in loans from Rural Development. From that \$5,100,000, NCIC has made \$20.7 million in loans to over 200 small businesses, public and non-profit organizations. Another \$104.5 million in other funds have been leveraged, **impacting 2,685 jobs.**

"We have been partnering with NCIC since 1980," said Shippee. "We can always count on NCIC to leverage the funds they receive from Rural Development and use them for maximum economic impact."

NCIC was organized in 1975 and began operations in 1976. NCIC's goals are to generate and preserve employment and other social and economic benefits for the region by prudent investment of its own resources. The Corporation provides capital and professional assistance for a wide range of business and community development ventures.



Rural Development is an Equal Opportunity Lender, Provider, and Employer. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, D. C. 20250-9410



## RURAL DEVELOPMENT INVESTS IN NORTH CONWAY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

On July 7<sup>th</sup>, the North Conway Water Precinct held an open house to thank the individuals and organizations that have supported the new water and sewer systems. Among those who were honored was Rural Development, which used the occasion to present the precinct with a ceremonial check for \$1,882,000, the last phase of funding for Contract 5 of the water and sewer improvements. Previous Rural Development funding, from fiscal year 2001 – 2004, totaled \$10,481,203.



**Peter Thomas, Business and Cooperative Programs Administrator of USDA Rural Development, presented a \$1,882,000 ceremonial check to Jim Umberger, Commissioner of the North Conway Water Precinct. Joining the presentation was Senator John Sununu, Jolinda LaClair, State Director of USDA Rural Development for New Hampshire and Vermont, and NH Legislative Councilor Ray Burton.**

The Mount Washington Valley Economic Council received a \$500,000 Intermediary Relending Loan to capitalize their revolving loan fund. Low interest loans from this fund will be used to relend for business and community development. Towns eligible in New Hampshire to receive these low interest loans are: Albany, Bartlett, Chatham, Conway, Eaton, Freedom, Hale's Location, Jackson, Madison, Ossipee, Tamworth, and Brownfield.

**Peter Thomas, Business and Cooperative Programs Administrator of USDA Rural Development, presented a \$500,000 ceremonial check to Jac Cuddy, Executive Director of the Mount Washington Valley Economic Council. Joining the presentation was Senator John Sununu; Dan Kennedy; Chair of Education Committee, MWVEC; and Jolinda LaClair, State Director of USDA Rural Development for New Hampshire and Vermont.**



**USDA Rural Development employees, Beverly Mason of the Conway, NH office and Janice Gingras of the Berlin, NH office listen as Dave Bernier, Superintendent of the North Conway Water Precinct, describes the wastewater treatment plant operations.**



**The North Conway Public Library received a \$7,300 Community Facilities Grant in Fiscal Year 2004 to upgrade wiring, heating and air conditioning systems. The library, serving North Conway and surrounding towns since 1905, receives no town funds; instead it is funded by bequests, life memberships, fundraisers and donations from the community.**

## Rural Development through Cooperation

Many people don't realize that a core piece of the Rural Development mission includes fostering the development of new and existing cooperatives. User-owned cooperatives process and market products, purchase production supplies or consumer goods, provide housing and credit, build and operate rural utilities, and provide other services needed by rural residents. By working together, rural residents are often able to reduce costs, obtain services that might otherwise be unavailable, and achieve greater returns for their products. And, because cooperatively structured businesses are locally owned and controlled, the jobs, profits, and resources generated by co-op businesses tend to stay in the community much longer than they do in the case of corporations owned by distant investors.

One way we assist cooperatives is through our Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program which funds non-profit organizations that assist cooperatives. *Cooperative Development Institute (CDI)*, located in Greenfield, MA, is a recipient of the program and has assisted many VT and NH cooperatives. The mission of CDI is to increase economic opportunities and benefits in the Northeast (New England and New York) by fostering the growth and success of cooperatively structured enterprises—that is, businesses owned and operated by groups. CDI serves agricultural producer co-ops (of both commodities and 'value-added' products or services), worker-owned businesses of all imaginable types from homecare providers to manufacturers, and consumer-owned enterprises such as cooperative grocery stores and housing complexes, credit unions, and utilities.

CDI has a regional pool of specialists in market research, business planning, enterprise feasibility and analysis, strategic planning, and organizational development. Staff and associates are experienced in the special dynamics of how individuals work as a group to consider or undertake a common business venture, and they offer a full range of board, management and membership training programs. The development practitioners at CDI can deliver complete project management services to new co-op startups, from strategic planning, communications, facilitation, and accounting to consultant and staff oversight. Regular planning sessions, reports and consultations ensure that co-op members own and control the development process. Some recent VT/NH projects of CDI include:

- **Springfield, VT Food Co-op:** CDI is using a \$25,000 USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant to support the cooperative's strategic planning, business stabilization and expansion. CDI prepared and conducted surveys, guided interviews and market research as well as facilitating a financial analysis and member visioning activity.
- **Farmers Market Business Development:** CDI is working with the region's State Departments of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension staff and farmers markets to develop an in-depth training program for these group-based businesses. The training will cover basic business and management, membership services, and how to use alliances and associations to strengthen local markets.
- **New England Family Dairy Farms Cooperative, NH:** CDI is working with the region's producers to develop a cooperative strategy to create a “trademark” or logo identifying milk from New England dairy farms. Consumers will be given the opportunity to demonstrate their support for local, family-owned agriculture and for the beautiful New England landscapes they cherish, in their milk purchases.



- **New England Sliced Apple Project:** CDI has taken an active role in discussions with apple wholesalers, State Departments of Agriculture, and the New England Apple Producers Association regarding the feasibility of processing and marketing a sliced apple product. As part of a contract with the NH Department of Agriculture, CDI is completing a business planning study for industry leaders in the regions.
- **Green Mountain Spinnery, VT:** CDI is working with the Vermont Employee Ownership Center to help this 20-year-old wool processing business transform itself into a worker-owned cooperative, enabling the original owners to retire while sustaining a viable business and 10 to 12 good quality manufacturing jobs.



For more information on CDI's services, contact Lynda Brushett or Laurie Broussard at CDI: (413) 774-7599 or [info@cooplife.coop](mailto:info@cooplife.coop). CDI's central office is located at 277 Federal St., Greenfield MA 01301.



Another organization assisting cooperatives is the *New Hampshire Community Loan Fund (NHCLF)* which received its first Rural Cooperative Development Grant in 2004. The focus of NHCLF's cooperative activity is the conversion of privately owned manufactured home parks to cooperative ownership. In addition to expanding their already successful program in NH, the RD grant will allow NHCLF to train other non-profit organizations to also provide this service. Toward this goal, a seminar "Building Wealth through Ownership of Manufactured Housing," is scheduled for November 1-3 in Manchester, NH. For more information contact Paul Bradley at 603-224-6669 or go to their web site at [www.nhclf.org](http://www.nhclf.org).



RD also has many cooperatives in our Business and Industrial Loan Guarantee portfolio, and our Value Added Producer Grants have assisted both the Cabot Creamery and VT Quality Meats agricultural producer cooperatives. The Vermont Opportunities Credit Union, which is organized as a cooperative, has recently become one of the small business lenders in our Intermediary Relending Program.

Our National Office publishes the magazine "Rural Cooperatives" bimonthly. Information on this and other publications can be found at our national web site: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/csdir.htm>. We are proud of our accomplishments assisting cooperatives in VT and NH. If you know of a cooperative that may be interested in our programs, please contact our Business and Cooperative Specialist, Mike Dolce, at 802-775-7014 or [michael.dolce@vt.usda.gov](mailto:michael.dolce@vt.usda.gov).



## EARTH DAY – APRIL 2005



Senator John Sununu and the New Hampshire staff of USDA Rural Development celebrated Earth Day with the members of the Rollinsford Water and Sewer District at the open house of their new wastewater treatment plant. The District received a \$1,000,000 loan and an \$800,000 grant from USDA Rural Development.

**Senator John Sununu presented District Commissioner Kenneth Shorey with a United States Flag that had been flown over the Capitol in Washington, D.C.**

Lieutenant Governor Brian Dubie celebrated Earth Day with children from the Brook Street School in Barre, VT. USDA Rural Development staff helped the children make treasure bags out of small canvas bags that they decorated with recyclable materials such as button, ribbons and scraps of material.



**Children listen as Susan Poulin, Community Programs Technician, reads an "Earth Day Poem".**



**Lieutenant Governor Brian Dubie listens as Naomi Hatch, Community Programs Specialist, talks to the children about the importance of recycling and the fun of reusing discarded materials.**



## OPPORTUNITIES OF NOTE

### **CONNECTING RURAL DEVELOPMENT'S ASSETS – WORKSHOPS AVAILABLE**

Rural Development staff have been presenting a three-hour overview of USDA Rural Development programs to interested parties in Vermont and New Hampshire. If your group or partners are interested in learning more about the Rural Development loan and grant programs that serve rural residents, businesses and communities, please call Carolyn Lawrence at 802-828-6002 or email [carolyn.lawrence@vt.usda.gov](mailto:carolyn.lawrence@vt.usda.gov) to arrange a presentation. Workshops were held in Berlin and Lancaster, NH in May 2004, Newport, NH in January 2005, Wakefield and Laconia, NH in April 2005 and in Randolph, VT in July 2005. A September workshop is being planned for the Conway, NH area, and a workshop for Grand Isle/Franklin County will be held on October 19 at the Northwest Medical Center. Planning for a workshop in Addison County is underway.

### **SELF HELP HOUSING PROGRAM – WORKSHOPS AVAILABLE**

USDA Rural Development's Self Help Housing Program has allowed many families achieve the dream of owning their own home. Self-Help loans help groups of 6 to 10 low-income families build their own homes by providing materials and the skilled labor they cannot furnish themselves. The families must agree to work together until all homes are finished.

Self help works in combination with a grant program to nonprofit organizations and the direct single family lending program, although other home financing sources can be used. The nonprofits help families build their homes by providing technical assistance.

Joe Silveira, USDA Rural Development Construction Analyst, and Michael Bard, USDA Rural Development Housing Specialist, are available to meet with your nonprofit group to discuss the Self Help Housing Program. You can reach Michael Bard at 802-828-6013 or email him at [michael.bard@vt.usda.gov](mailto:michael.bard@vt.usda.gov)

### **WHAT WORKS! RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHEAST – September 28-30, 2005 – Burlington, VT**

The University of Vermont Extension and the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development will be hosting a conference to bring together a diverse group of national and regional experts to explore the opportunities and challenges of promoting entrepreneurship as a vehicle for rural economic development.

Conference registration is \$100 if registered before August 19. The complete conference brochure and registration materials are available online at [www.regonline.com/whatworks](http://www.regonline.com/whatworks) or by contacting UVM Extension at 802-223-2389, ext 13.

### **NEW HAMPSHIRE COMMUNITY LOAN FUND (NHCLF) SEMINAR**

The New Hampshire Community Loan Fund (NHCLF) will host a seminar "Building Wealth through Ownership of Manufactured Housing" on November 1-3 in Manchester, NH. NHCLF will use a Rural Cooperative Development Grant it received from Rural Development to train other non-profit organizations in the conversion of privately owned manufactured home parks to cooperative ownership. For more information contact Paul Bradley at 603-224-6669 or go to their web site at [www.nhclf.org](http://www.nhclf.org)

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

The Vermont/New Hampshire USDA Rural Development Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2005 is now on the Vermont USDA Rural Development Web Site, <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. If you did not receive a hard copy and would like one, please call Carolyn Lawrence at 802-828-6002 or email [carolyn.lawrence@vt.usda.gov](mailto:carolyn.lawrence@vt.usda.gov) to request one.

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW EMPLOYEES



**Bonnie Cohen** has joined our Rutland Office as a Rural Development Technician. Bonnie spent 15 years in the banking industry and has been a state licensed health care consultant since 1987. She has two sons, one a senior software engineer for a bio-tech company in California and a son in Boston who is an audio engineer.

**Laurie Racine** is our new Rural Development Technician in the St. Albans Office. Laurie has worked in the legal field since 1980 and still works part time as a para-legal. She has two active daughters at home and says that “she enjoys a challenge.”



**Jason Perkins** is the new Rural Housing Specialist in the Montpelier Office. Jason, a graduate of Lyndon State College, came to us from Homeland Security where he was an adjudication officer. Jason grew up in Barton, VT and is currently living in Newport Center.



**Leslie Christian** has joined our staff for the summer to help with special projects. Leslie will be a senior at Wagner College on Staten Island in NY where she is majoring in English and Journalism and plays Division 1 Lacrosse.



**Linda Brooks** is the new Multi-Family Housing Technician in the Montpelier, VT area office. In Linda’s “former life” she was the owner of a commercial and residential cleaning service. She grew up in the Boston area and now lives in Montpelier. She has two sons, one a musician and computer specialist, and a younger son who graduated from Emerson College with a degree in communications.



**Tricia Bean**, our new Rural Development Technician in the Montpelier, VT area office comes to us from Blue Cross. She is a graduate of Johnson State with a degree in Business Management. Tricia grew up in Charlotte and now lives in East Calais.

